### THE REWARD OF COLUMBUS.

To Christ he cried to quell Death's deafening measure,
Sung by the storm to Death's own chartless sea;
To Christ he cried for glimpse of grass or tree,
When, hovering o'er the calm, Death watched at leisure;
And when he showed the men, now dazed with pleasure,
Faith's new world glittering starlike on the lee,
"I trust that by the help of Christ," said he,
"I presently shall light on golden treasure."
What treasure found he? Chains and pains and sorrow—
Yea, all the wealth those noble seekers find
Whose footfalls mark the music of mankind!
'Twas his to lend a life; 'twas Man's to borrow;
'Twas his to make, but not to share, the morrow,
Who in Love's memory lives this morn enshrined.
—Theodore Watts in London Athenæum.

## THE LOST MAIL BAGS

It was evening in Vladivostok. Out on the harbor the dark waters of the sea of Japan reflected the twinkling lights from half a dozen vessels lying snugly at anchor, and westward behind the town the moon shone dimly on the snowclad plains and rugged slopes of the Sikota mountains, beyond which, across the frozen waters of the Amur, stretched for thousands of leagues the great Siberian desert. Vladivostok might almost be called the "jumping off place" of the world, lying as it does on the very eastern extremity of the great Russian empire.

A few years ago it was a barren spit of land, uninhabited and forlorn. Now the Russian drum beats at sunrise, and ships of all nations float their flags in the harbor.

On this particular evening, while in the narrow street of the town all was silent save for the occasional tread of a Russian sentry, sounds of mirth and laughter floated from the brilliantly lighted windows of the long, low garrison house, for the commandant of the station was giving a dinner.

It was quite a cosmopolitan gathering that filled the long table, for among the guests were Russian, French and English naval officers, and two or three Anglo-Indians who had come up from Shanghai on the mail steamer.

The last course had been removed, and the quickened conversation that comes with the cigars had just commenced, when the commandant was summoned outside, and, when he returned a moment or two later, the most observant of the guests detected a faint shadow in his face.

The assemblage broke up at a late hour, and as the guests passed out on the way to their vessels a young French officer cried out to the commandant: "What is the matter, mon capitaine? You look sad and depressed."

Captain Shanoff laughed.

"It is nothing, Lieutenant Garceau," he replied—"nothing but the onerous burden of official duties. However, if you have on board your vessel a man with iron nerves and the bravery of an African lion you can send him to me."

The Frenchman, taking this in jest, laughed and passed on with a cheery "au revoir."

One young man, who had overheard this brief conversation, purposely lingered till the last, and as the commandant held out his hand to bid him good night he said:

"Captain Shanoff, pardon my intrusion. I heard your conversation with the Frenchman. I saw, though he did not, that you were in earnest, and now I offer you my services."

The captain looked at him in surprise.

"You are one of the passengers by the mail steamer from Shanghai?" he said.

"You are correct," said the man. "My name is Luke Mowbray, of the Indian civil service."

"And what is your object in making this proposition?" asked the captain.

"I am fond of adventure and sport," replied Mowbray. "Since leaving India I have had a dull time of it, and my chance for excitement and change will be doubly welcome."

The Russian captain stood in hesitation for a moment, and then leading the way silently to an apartment beyond the dining hall he motioned Mowbray to a seat and sat down facing him.

"Now," said Captain Shanoff, "I will explain my conversation with the Frenchman as briefly as possible. Thirty miles from here, among the Sikota mountains, there is a small detachment of Russians engaged in mining operations. Mail bags are conveyed to them twice a week by a native, who makes the return journey in two days. A month ago the carrier left Vladivostok for the encampment. He has not been heard of since. Two weeks ago a second carrier started, and he, too, has completely disappeared. For more than a month we have heard nothing of our companions. It is a profound mystery. Tonight I learn that no one can be found who will undertake to carry the mail bag. The natives here are cowards, and what few men I have, while they are good soldiers, are not the men to unravel a mystery."

"What is your theory?" asked Mowbray. "Robbers? Wild beasts? Or could they have lost their way?"

"Wild animals are scarce," said the captain. "There are no robbers in this part of Russia, and the path, while difficult, is plain."

"When should the mail bag go?" went on Mowbray.

"It came by today's steamer, and should leave early in the morning," replied Shanoff.

"Well," said Mowbray, "the adventure promises well. I will undertake to reach the encampment with the mail bag."

Captain Shanoff at first refused to listen to his proposition; but Mowbray insisted so firmly that he at last gave a reluctant consent.

Although he hesitated to incur the responsibility that would assuredly fall on his shoulders in case anything should befall the brave young fellow, he was secretly overjoyed at his good fortune, for the strange disappearance of the two natives had produced such an effect upon both natives and soldiers that no one could be found in Vladivostok who would undertake the journey.

Moreover, the captain had a grave suspicion that the native carriers might have fled into the interior with the mail bag, for strangely enough the missing men were brothers.

This suspicion, however, was of the vaguest, for what possible motive could two ignorant natives have for stealing a lot of worthless letters and fleeing into an almost uninhabited desert?

Before day broke on the following morning Luke Mowbray slipped secretly and noiselessly out of Vladivostok, and turned westward toward the pine crowned ridges of the Sikota range.

He rode the commandant's horse and wore a huge pair of boots the Russian had lent him. Before him on the saddle rested the mail bag, and in his right hand he carried a loaded revolver, ready for instant use.

It was broad daylight when he crossed the plain and rode into the mountains. He had little fear of losing his way, for Captain Shanoff had impressed the road carefully upon his mind, and to further aid him the trees were marked with an ax at short intervals.

Luke was troubled with no misgivings as his horse slowly picked his way over the frozen ground. He was one of those adventurous fellows who roam the world over seeking out strange places and untrodden paths, and he was keenly enjoying this little Siberian excursion.

Captain Shanoff had truly declared the road to be bad. For ten miles it led up and down hill, over stones and fallen trees, and more than once Luke had to dismount and lead the horse over some unusually bad spot.

About noon he reached the top of the highest ridge and made a brief halt for lunch. The valley below him was thickly wooded and was deep and narrow. The road led through it for seven or eight miles, and then, the captain had said, it crossed a gap in the mountains at a point only three miles distant from the mining camp.

It had suddenly grown colder, and the air was keen and biting as Luke rode slowly down the mountain side. The valley was wild and desolate, and Luke had to admit to himself as he spurred on his horse that it was a very uncomfortable bit of country.

For the first time in his recollection a strange feeling of uneasiness crept gradually over him, and he tried in vain to shake off its influence. To make matters worse, a fine snow began to come down and the sky grew dark and gloomy.

Luke was by no means superstitious, but the idea now took firm possession of him that some great peril was approaching, and for a moment he wished that he had not volunteered for such an uncertain piece of business. Then he grew angry with himself.

"What nonsense!" he cried half aloud.

And whipping up his horse he galloped at a swifter pace up the valley, skimming over the crusted snow, and leaping over rocks and bushes until the forest dwindled to the edge of a clearing, a long, low bit of ground, undulated with hillocks of drifted snow.

On the very edge his horse stopped and sniffed the air uneasily. Then he dashed forward with a start, almost unseating his rider.

On the frozen ground was some dark object, and as Luke with difficulty pulled his horse up short he saw, with a thrill of horror, that it was a mail bag similar to the one he carried.

It was lying half under the snow, and as he dismounted and tried to pull it loose he discovered dark red stains on the frozen crest. Horror stricken, he stood still in amazement, forgetting to pull the bag loose, when suddenly the horse pricked up his ears and began to tremble violently.

With a sudden impulse Luke threw himself back into the saddle on the instant, for far in the rear came a long, mournful howl that trembled and died away.

The mystery was solved.

Like a flash Luke realized the fate of the two mail carriers—a fate that might ere long be meted out to him, for the howl he heard was the cry of hungry wolves. Again and again it rose on the wintry air, louder and more savage. Already they scented their prey.

Driving the spurs deep Luke flashed up the valley at a blind and furious pace.

He knew too well the nature of his foes. The commandant had assured him that no wild animals frequented that part of the country. So much the worse. The hungry brutes had been driven by starvation toward the coast, and having no doubt devoured the two natives they had taken up their habitation in the valley.

Soon the howl was repeated and taken up on each side until the forest rang with their doleful sounds.

They gradually came closer, though the brave horse was thundering onward with all his strength. A little while longer and he might be saved, for already dimly through the trees Luke could see the break in the mountains.

The forest became more open, and once, turning half around in the saddle, he saw the dusky forms leaping through the bushes. A terrific howl told only too plainly that they had sighted their prey. There was the gap before him now, with the path winding over its rugged slope. The brave horse dashed up at full speed, and in an instant he had gained the summit.

But the maddened brutes were almost at his heels, and turning sharply around Luke fired at the foremost, a great, gaunt animal, with foaming jaws and bloodshot eyes. It was a good shot, for the beast tumbled over in the snow, and the rest of the pack turned on the wounded comrade and tore him to pieces. Luke was able to gain some yards.

In a moment they were after him again, full cry, as he dashed down the opposite slope, and twice turning round he fired into the midst of the pack.

There was a furious snarl and a howl of pain, but they came on unchecked.

His situation was now growing desperate, for the horse's speed was failing, and his strides growing feebler and feebler.

The wolves were a dozen yards behind and gaining fast.

Luke turned again and fired, and as he aimed to give them a second shot a dire accident befell him. The barrel of the revolver caught in the fur trimmings of his coat and dropped to the ground, leaving him absolutely at the mercy of his savage foes.

Sick with despair he made one last effort to escape, leaning forward on the horse's neck and urging the brave animal to greater speed. In a moment more horse and rider would have been overtaken and dragged to the ground, when suddenly the sound of running water reached Luke's ears, and some distance before him down the slope of the hill he saw a low, deep ravine crossing the path.

A little closer and he saw distinctly what was before him. A mountain stream, in ordinary times a mere brawling brook, but now swollen by rain to a raging torrent, swept between two steep banks. Here was a chance for safety. If he could only leap the gulf his ravenous pursuers might be left behind.

Leaning forward on his horse's neck he urged him on with one last, despairing effort.

The brave animal thundered down the hill, still ahead of the howling pack, reached the brink of the gorge, rose without hesitation into the air and came down safely on the other side.

The wolves, rushing blindly on, plunged over the edge of the precipice, and though some of them perished on the sharp rocks, the remainder, struggling down into a deep pool some yards below, swam through the icy waters to the bank, and struggling to the top took up the chase again as though nothing had happened.

Luke, fifty yards in front by this time, looked back just as the topmost wolf came in sight over the bank, followed by half a dozen more in quick succession.

His heart sank within him, and for a moment he was tempted to give up the struggle.

As the horse, startled by the renewed howling of the pursuing pack, dashed off again, trembling and perspiring, Luke's eye caught the sight of a dark object lying on the snow ahead of him. It was a rifle, the lost property no doubt of one of the native mail carriers.

Guiding the horse directly toward it he leaned down suddenly from the saddle and as he rushed past made a quick snatch at it.

The horse swerving at this critical moment he missed his aim, and foolishly making a second attempt overbalanced himself, and with a cry of horror shot headforemost into the snow, while his riderless horse thundered on his course.

For a second Luke lay stunned and dizzy, the howling of the wolves ringing faintly in his ears. Then, pulling himself upright, he looked eagerly around him.

Horror upon horrors! The foremost wolf, a great, gaunt creature, with blood red jaws, was nearly upon him. Now, seeing his prey so still, defenseless—within his grasp at last—the brute came stealthily forward, with sneaking tread.

Luke shouted at him, but the wolf only growled. Picking up the rifle, he snapped it in vain, and then, seizing it by the barrel, he swung it around his body.

With a furious spring the wolf was upon him. He dimly saw the glaring eyes close to his own, felt the hot breath on his neck, and then heard a blinding, deafening report ringing close to his ears, after which he knew no more.

Strange faces were bending over him when he regained consciousness. His rescuers were the Russians from the mining camp, who had hastened to his aid when the first bullets were fired. A fortunate shot had killed Luke's assailant in the nick of time, and the remainder of the pack, cheated of their human prey, had gone on in pursuit of the horse.

Luke was carried to the camp—it was only two miles away—and by the following day he was feeling himself again.

The mystery was cleared up at last. The fate of the two natives was only too clear, and in addition one of the Russians from the camp had doubtless met the same death, for he had made an attempt to reach Vladivostok a week before and had not been heard from since.

Half a dozen of them ventured out fully armed, and found all the mail bags and the bones of Luke's poor horse. No trace of the two luckless natives was discovered, and nothing was seen of the wolves either. Probably the remnant of the pack had been frightened out of the neighborhood.

Two days later, Luke was escorted back to Vladivostok, and was eagerly welcomed by Captain Shanoff, who was overjoyed to see him safe and sound.

The commandant wished the brave young fellow to spend some time with him, but Luke declined. He had seen quite enough of Siberia, and the next steamer took him back to Shanghai, for he was more than satisfied with his experience with Russian wolves.—New York Recorder.

#### A Romance of 1900.

Extract from a dime novel of the future:

Then the pirate king shouted in excited accents: "What, ho! my lads! Here is the site of the buried treasure. Heave up yon bedded plate of brass and look beneath!"

The noble Don y Mackerel forced back the bandits, and with one mighty swing of his sword clove the brazen ring in twain. There, carefully buried away in a jeweled casket, lay two scuttles of coal, full to the brim!—Chicago News-Record.

#### A Great Interest.

When Grattan was a young student he was fond of practicing oratory in a certain wood, in a part of which was a gallows from which depended the rusty chains in which a criminal had been hung many years before.

When he was once apostrophizing this melancholy object a stranger came up unperceived behind him and said to him: "How the devil did you get down?"

The young orator coolly replied, "Ah, sir, you have an interest in that question."—Bench and Bar of Ireland.

#### An Omission.

Harry, aged five, had never happened to see the moon in the daytime. He came down the other morning shrieking with laughter.

"Why, Harry, what's the matter?" inquired his mother.

"Oh, mamma," said he, as soon as he could speak, "what a joke; they've forgotten to take the moon in!"—Tit-Bits.

#### They Wanted Revenge.

Bunker—What! Back from the far west? Have a good time?

Hill—If being attacked by Indians is having a good time, I had it.

Bunker—Why, how did you come to be attacked by Indians?

Hill—I sent them a box of clothes I had been wearing at the seashore this summer.—Clothier and Furnisher.

#### Youthful Grammar.

The grammar of little children is oftentimes very amusing. A little four-year-old girl, who had that pretty matronly way that little girls are apt to assume with their younger brothers and sisters, was at the breakfast table with some guests, and wishing to show her superior knowledge and age she said: "My little brother Van said he had 'taked' two biscuits. He meant to have said, 'I have tooken two biscuits.' You know Van is only three years old. He doesn't always know how to say things."—Christian Union.

### PRESCIENCE.

Sighed a wave in middle ocean:
"Oh, to reach the warm, white shore!
On its breast to lie in silence,
Hushed in peace forevermore.

"Ah, I know what lies before me—
I at last shall clasp the shore,
Break my heart on it one moment,
Then moan on forevermore."
—Anna Reeve Aldrich.

## THE RETURN.

Five minutes ago I drew the window curtain aside and let the mellow sunset light contend with the glare from the girandoles. Below lay the orchard of Vernon Garth, rich in heavily flowered fruit trees—yonder a medlar, here a pear, next a quince. As my eyes, unaccustomed to the day, blinked rapidly, the recollection came of a scene forty-five years past, and once more beneath the oldest tree stood the girl I loved, mischievously plucking yarrow, and despite its evil omen twining the snowy clusters in her black hair.

Again her coquettish words rang in my ears: "Make me thy lady! Make me the richest woman in England, and I promise thee, Rupert, we shall be the happiest of God's creatures." And I remembered how the mad thirst for gold filled me; how I trusted in her fidelity, and without reasoning or even telling her that I would conquer fortune for her sake I kissed her sadly and passed into the world. Then followed a complete silence until the Star of Europe, the greatest diamond discovered in modern times, lay in my hand—a rough, unpolished stone, not unlike the lumps of spar I had often seen lying on the sandy lanes of my native country.

This should be Rose's own, and all the others that clanked so melodiously in their leather bulse should go toward fulfilling her ambition. Rich and happy I should be soon, and should I not marry an untitled gentlewoman, sweet in her prime? The twenty years' interval of work and sleep was like a fading dream, for I was going home. The knowledge thrilled me so that my nerves were strung tight as iron ropes, and I laughed like a young boy. And it was all because my home was to be in Rose Pascal's arms.

I crossed the sea and posted straight for Halkton village. The old hostelry was crowded. Jane Hopgarth, whom I remembered as a ruddy faced child, stood on the box edged terrace, courtesying in matronly fashion to the departing mail coach. An alteration in the sign board attracted my attention; the white lilies had been painted over with a miter and the name changed from the Pascal Arms to the Lord Bishop. Angrily, aghast at this disloyalty, I cross questioned the ostlers, who hurried to and fro, but failing to obtain any coherent replies I was fain to content myself with a mental denunciation of the times.

Twilight had fallen before I reached the cottage at the entrance of the park. This was in a ruinous condition; here and there sheaves in the thatched roof had parted and formed crevices through which smoke filtered. Some of the tiny windows had been walled up, and even where the glass remained snakelike ivy hindered any light falling into their thick recesses.

The door stood open, although the evening was chilly. As I approached the heavy autumnal dew shook down from the firs and fell upon my shoulders. A bat, swooping in an undulation, struck between my eyes and fell to the grass moaning querulously. I entered. A withered woman sat beside the peat fire. She held a pair of steel knitting needles which she moved without cessation. There was no thread upon them, and when they clicked her lips twitched as if she had counted.

Some time passed before I recognized Rose's foster mother, Elizabeth Carless. The russet colors of her cheeks had faded and left a sickly gray; those sunken, dimmed eyes were utterly unlike the bright, black orbs that had danced so mirthfully. Her stature, too, had shrunk. I was struck with wonder. Elizabeth could not be more than fifty-six years old. I had been away twenty years; Rose was fifteen when I left her and I had heard Elizabeth say that she was only twenty-one at the time of her darling's weaning. But what a change! She had such an air of weary grief that my heart grew sick.

Advancing to her side I touched her arm. She turned, but neither spoke nor seemed aware of my presence. Soon, however, she arose and helping herself along by grasping the scanty furniture, tottered to a window and peered out. Her right hand had crept to her throat; she untied the string of her gown and took from her bosom a pomander set in a battered silver case. I cried out. Rose had loved that toy in her childhood. Thousands of times had we played ball with it. Elizabeth held it to her mouth and mumbled it as if it were a baby's hand.

Maddened with impatience, I caught her shoulder and roughly bade her say where I should find Rose. But something awoke in her eyes, and she shrank away to the other side of the house place. I followed. She cowered on the floor, looking at me with a strange horror. Her lips began to move, but no sound issued. Only when I crossed to the threshold did she rise, and then her head moved wildly from side to side, and her hands pressed close to her breast, as if the pain there were too great to endure.

I ran from the place, not daring to look back. In a few minutes I had reached the balustraded wall of the hall garden. The house looked as if no careful hand had touched it for years. The elements had played havoc with its oriels, and many of the latticed frames hung on single hinges. The curtain of the blue parlor hung outside, draggled and faded and half hidden by a thick growth of bindwood.

With an almost savage force I raised my arm high above my head and brought my fist down upon the central panel of the door. There was no need for such violence, for the decayed fastenings made no resistance, and some of the rotten boards fell to the ground. As I entered the hall and saw the ancient furniture, once so fondly kept, now mildewed and crumbling to dust, quick sobs burst from my throat. Rose's spinet stood beside the door of the withdrawing room. How many carols had we sung to its music! As I passed my foot struck one of the legs, and the rickety structure groaned as if it were coming to pieces. I thrust out my hand to steady it, but at my touch the velvet covering of the lid came off and the tiny gilt ornaments rattled downward.

By now the full moonlight pierced the window and quivered on the floor. As I gazed on the tremulous pattern it changed into quaint devices of hearts, daggers, rings and a thousand other tokens. All suddenly another object glided among them so quickly that I wondered whether my eyes had been at fault—a tiny satin shoe, stained crimson across the lappets. A revulsion of feeling came to my soul and drove away all my fear. I had seen that self same shoe white and unsoiled twenty years before, when vain, vain Rose danced among her reapers at the harvest home. And my voice cried out in ecstasy: "Rose, heart of mine! Delight of all the world's delights!"

She stood before me, wondering, amazed. Alas, so changed! The red and yellow silk shawl still covered her shoulders; her hair still hung in those eldritch curls. But the beautiful face had grown wan and tired, and across the forehead were drawn lines like silver threads. She threw her arms around my neck, and pressing her bosom heavily on mine sobbed so piteously that I grew afraid for her and drew back the long masses of hair which had fallen forward, and kissed again and again those lips that were too lovely for simile. Never came a word of chiding from them. "Love," she said, when she had regained her breath, "the past struggle was sharp and torturing—the future struggle will be crueler still. What a great love yours was to wait and trust for so long! Would that mine had been as powerful! Poor, weak heart that I could not endure!"

The tones of a wild fear throbbed through all her speech strongly, but yet with insufficient power to prevent her from feeling the tenderness of those moments. Often timorously raising her head from my shoulder she looked around, and then turned with a soft, inarticulate and glad murmur to hide her face on my bosom. I spoke fervently; told of the years spent away from her; how, when working in the diamond fields, she had ever been present in my fancy; how at night her name had fallen from my lips in my only prayer; how I had dreamed of her among the greatest in the land—the richest and I dare swear the loveliest woman in the world.

I grew warmer still. All the gladness which had been constrained for so long now burst wildly from my lips; a myriad of rich ideas resolved into words which, being spoken, wove one long and delicious fit of passion. As we stood together the moon brightened and filled the chamber with a light like the day's. The ridges of the surrounding moorland stood out in sharp relief.

Rose drank in my declarations thirstily, but soon interrupted me with a heavy sigh. "Come away," she said softly. "I no longer live in this house. You must stay with me tonight. This place is so wretched now, for time, that in you and me has only strengthened love, has wrought much ruin here."

Half leaning on me she led me from the precincts of Bretton hall. We walked in silence over the waste that crowns the valley of the Whitelands, and being near the verge of the rocks saw the great pine wood sloping downward, lighted near us by the moon, but soon lost in density. Along the mysterious line where the light changed into gloom, intricate shadows of withered summer bracken struck and receded in a mimic battle. Before up lay the Priests' cliff. The moon was veiled here by a grove of elms, whose ever swaying branches alternately increased and lessened her brightness. This was a place of notoriety—a veritable Golgotha—a haunt fit only for demons. Murder and theft had been punished here, and to this day fireside stories are told of evil women dancing around that Druids' circle, carrying hearts plucked from gibbeted bodies.

"Rose," I whispered, "why have you brought me here?"

She made no reply, but pressed her head more closely to my shoulder. Scarcely had my lips closed than a sound like a hiss of a half strangled snake vibrated among the trees. It grew louder and louder. A monstrous shadow hovered above.

Rose from my bosom murmured: "Love is strong as death! Love is strong as death!"

I locked her in my arms so tightly that she grew breathless. "Hold me," she panted. "You are strong."

A cold hand touched our foreheads, so that benumbed we sank together to the ground, to fall instantly into a dreamless slumber.

When I awoke the clear gray light of the early morning had spread over the country. Beyond the hall garden the sun was just bursting through the clouds and had already spread a long golden haze along the horizon. The babbling of the streamlet that runs down to Halkton was so distinct that it seemed almost at my side. How sweetly the wild thyme smelled! Filled with the tender recollections of the night, without turning I called Rose Pascal from her sleep.

"Sweetheart, sweetheart, waken! waken! waken! See how glad the world looks—see the omens of a happy future!"

No answer came. I sat up, and looking around me saw that I was alone. A square stone lay near. When the sun was high I crept to read the inscription carved thereon, "Here, at four cross paths, lieth, with a stake through the bosom, the body of Rose Pascal, who in her sixteenth year willfully cast away the life God gave."—R. Murray Gilchrist in National Observer.

#### A New York Mystery.

A young lady belonging to one of the first families of New York returned from a walk. Her mother, who is very strict with her, asked:

"Where have you been?"

"I have just been taking a little fresh air in Central park."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Are you sure of it?"

"Of course I am. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing at all, except when you went out you took with you a parasol, and you came home with a gentleman's cane in your hand."—Texas Siftings.

#### His Mistake.

She was thirty-five at the lowest estimate, and she looked tenderly upon him as he slipped his arm around her waist.

"You are the first man," she murmured, "who ever put his arm around me."

He took it away swiftly.

"Great guns," he whispered hoarsely, "and I thought I knew a good thing when I saw it."—Detroit Free Press.